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FOR THAT HAND HAD CROSSED
THE DEADLINE WHILE YET
HE WAS ALIVE

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Chap. E672

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





U.S. Grant

GRANT.



DELIVERED

BY THE

REV. MILLER HAGEMAN,

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BEFORE THE

Grant Birthday Association

OF

NEW YORK.



AT THE ANNUAL BANQUET,

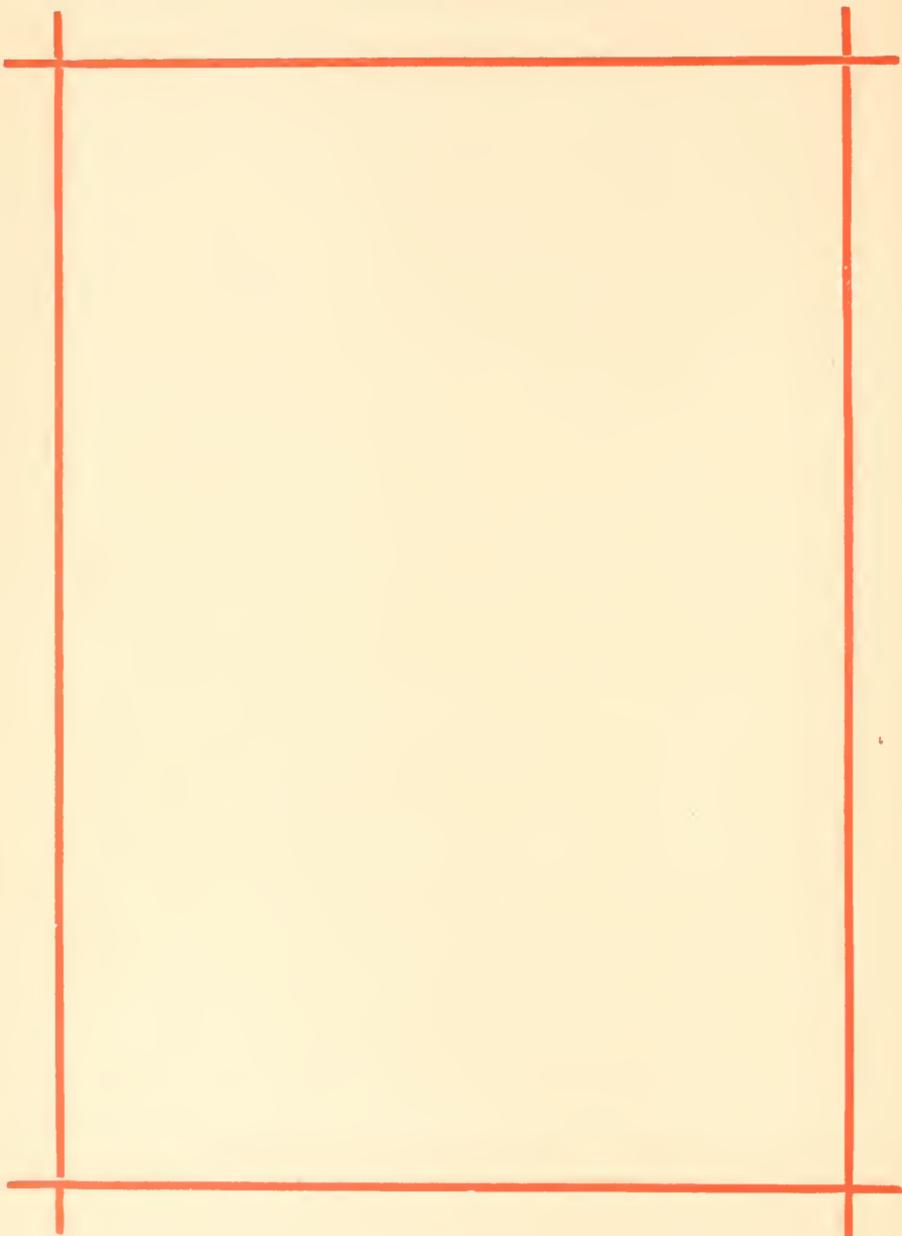
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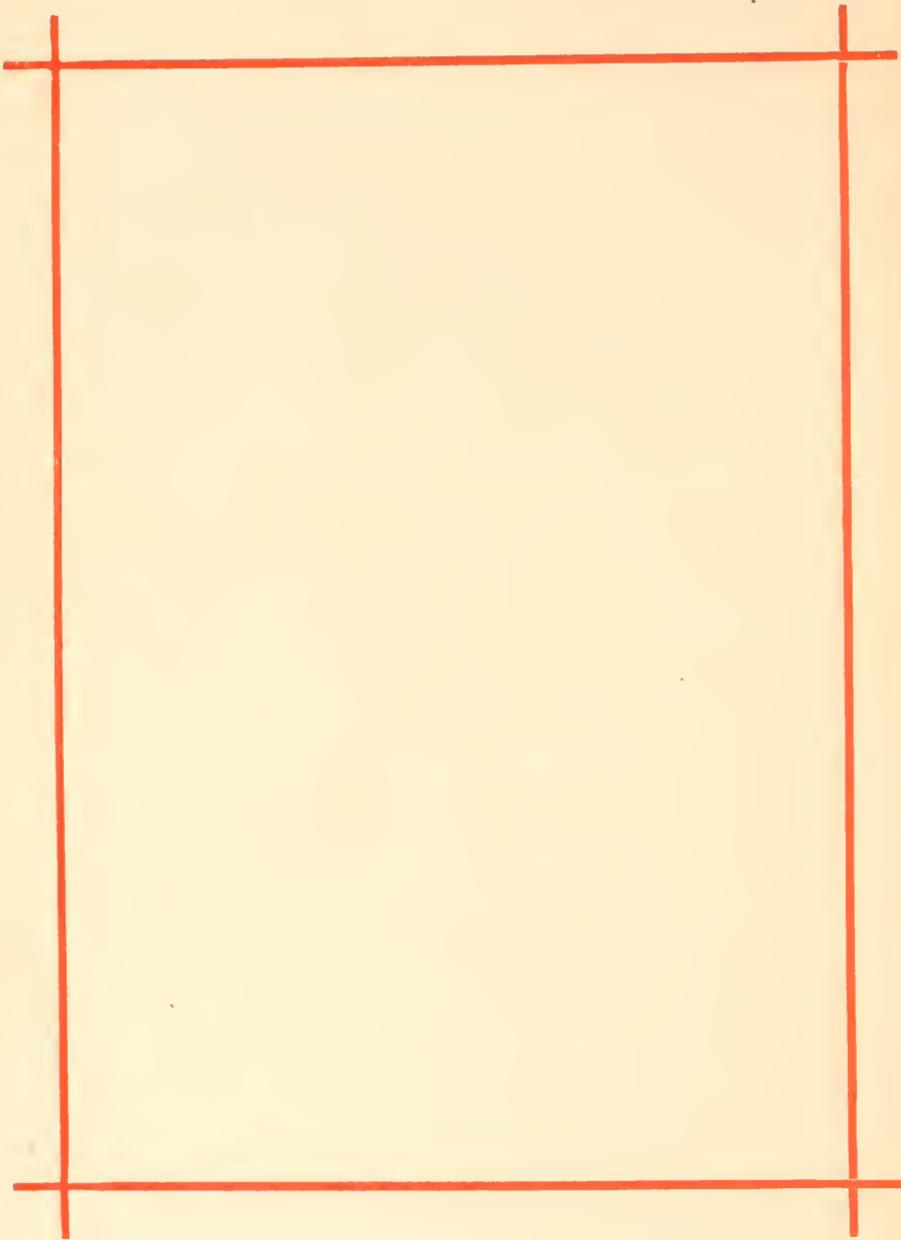
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DEDICATED
TO
GENERAL W. T. SHERMAN,
IN BEHALF OF THE
Grand Army of the Republic.



Grant.

In Life he conquered Rebellion.
In Death he cemented Reunion.



GRANT.

UPON his couch at dead of night the
dying conqueror lay,
Through the still watches of his sleep
breathing his life away :
When from the shadows of the tomb
with soft and stealthy tread,
There came a silent sentinel and stood
beside his bed.

Poised in its bony hand there gleamed a
keen, unerring dart,
The sleepless glitter of whose steel fell
pointed at his heart:
The while as listening there he lay at
midnight came a call,
“Surrender!” and the only terms, are,
“Unconditional.”
The stern old warrior started up from out
his martial dream,
As if beyond the picket-lines he saw the
sword’s fierce gleam ;

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“Halt! Stand and give the countersign,”
he gasped with hollow breath,
The while the skeleton between its teeth
ground hoarsely—“Death.”

“Death?” cried the dauntless warrior
with sudden burst of scorn,
As though he reined his battle-horse
and heard the bugle-horn:
“Death? What care I for Death, that at
his call my soul should crouch?
I’ve met him at the cannon’s mouth, I’ll
meet him on this couch.

Ho, spectre! drop that lifted hand and
lay thy summons by,
I fling defiance in thy face, O Death, I
will not die!

Give me that shaft of sleepless steel that
round me once again,
From it may flash in words of fire the
battle of a pen."

So spake the chief and from Death's
clutch he plucked that pen of steel,
And traced in trembling characters each
thunder-bolted peal.

Till from each answering mountain and
from each echoing nook,
The valley of the shadow with the tread
of armies shook.

Mounting his steed at midnight as when
'neath that dread sky,
He rode down in the dark alone to con-
quer or to die,

He sat the pale white horse of death
afront the serried line,

He faced the leaden sleet that swept
aslant the scarps of pine,

He saw his blades and banners flash far
down the dark ravine,
Till, plunged in smoke, he seems to fade
in fancy on the scene.
The ugly rents opened and closed about
him, rank on rank,
The bullet left its breath on him, the
steed beneath him sank,
The sharp command, the bristling charge,
the fort, the sulphurous steeps,
The fiery trails, the knee-deep field, the
trenches' gory heaps:

All, all once more before him passed as
on his dimming eye,
The midnight sun of memory shone o'er
him from on high.
He felt the shadows round him fold their
chilly winding-sheet,
He felt the heart's soft drum-taps for
the final roll-call beat,
He heard the night-watch on the wall
ticking its low tattoo,
So soon to hear the reveille sounding the
Grand Review.

He saw the shadow of his hand as with
prophetic track
It fell across the disk of time and set the
dial back ;
Signing his death-warrant, the while with
life he still must strive,
For that hand had crossed the dead-line
while yet he was alive.
Cold as a dead king's coronet gleams out
all grandly now,
Set with the jewels of his crown those
beads upon his brow ;

Cold as a figure carved in stone ahrong
the marts of men,
Propped up by that white pillow, that
hero of the pen.

He wrote, but not as poets in the tropics
of their youth,
For there was only time enough for him
to tell the truth :

He told the story simply for future years
to scan,
Too near the judgment of his God to care
for that of man.

What though each stroke of that sharp
pen was but a flash of pain?

What though each thought a bolt that
struck a splinter from his brain?

What though the weary watcher slept?
While Death bent sleepless by,

Where honor on misfortune called 'twere
cowardice to die.

Ah! 'twas not of himself he thought as
memory came and went,

For one there was who sleeplessly as death
beside him bent;

And when at length his task was wrought
as love's last glance he took,
Her image on his lifeless eye still kept
its living look.

Heroic man of iron mould, this modest
hero dies,
With only silence on those lips, that
rarest of replies ;
Too near our eyes to see as yet what
time shall show at last,
His faults were but the shadows that his
solid virtues cast.

Ignored, rebuked, maligned, displaced,
through all that could oppose,
Up from the bottom to the top that great
subaltern rose,
Till, with three armies in his grasp, he
stood at last alone,
The monarch of the mightiest force that
earth hath ever known.
Himself his own prime-counsellor, with-
out one petty whim,
He knew how to use rules without letting
those rules use him ·

With but one bright ambition that fired
his eager ken,

Where tyros of the topic art took places,
—he took men.

True to himself, true to his friends, and
to his country true,

He struck to save that country, and
where he struck, he slew.

In war as terrible as blood, yet tender as
the child

On whom amid the battle-shock so
lovingly he smiled;

For though he seemed with visage stern
to pity grown apart,

Beneath that iron armor beat a soft
and gentle heart.

And when the war was over and treason
knew its fall,

He entered not in triumph the conquered
capital,

But with a magnanimity that history
shall record,

Victor, he took the vanquished hand, but
scorned to take the sword.

A grand chivalric conqueror, he never
could forget,

Where brothers fought as bitter foes
they fell as brothers yet;

And when as comrades hand to hand
they bore him on his bier,

The blue and gray lost color in the
crystal of a tear.

Fair garden of the grounded arms,
through thy lute-fingered leaves

The northern and the southern wind
shall meet, as summer weaves

From many a willow's muffled harp a
chaplet wet with dew,
While heaven shall give its rosemary to
whom earth gave its rue.
Cut off in that far country to which his
soul hath passed,
Where the dead get no despatches and
the wires are down at last ;
No courier can call him back, no orders
reach him now,
No martinet can pluck the stars that
blossom on that brow.

O Dead Immortal ! take thy crown ; thy
martial dream is done,
Thine was the greatest battle that was
ever waged or won :
Wrought by indomitable will in lines of
adamant,
Still there, as if defying death, shall stand
the name of—GRANT.

Miller Taggart.







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